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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 000372

SIPDIS

STATE PASS AIT/W

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/26/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: TAIWAN USING NGOS FOR IRAQI HUMANITARIAN AID

Classified By: AIT Director Douglas Paal; Reasons: 1.4 (B/D)

1. (C) Summary. Taiwan has been active since 2003 providing Iraq humanitarian assistance and educational training through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) in cooperation with the NGO Mercy Corps. Taipei is eager to become more involved politically and economically in Iraq, but has been forced to use NGOs to coordinate its aid programs because Baghdad would not accept direct aid from Taiwan due to objections from Beijing. MOFA officials also assert that PRC NGOs in Iraq were instructed by Beijing to disrupt Taiwan-NGO activities. Taiwan officials claim that their aid projects are not politically motivated, but admit MOFA is considering the feasibility of establishing an office in Iraq once the security situation improves. Taipei believes its joint MOFA-NGO programs in Iraq have been successful and plan increasingly to use this model of cooperation as an avenue for Taiwan to be more active abroad and counter Beijing's global isolation campaign. End summary.

Blocked By the PRC

2. (C) Taiwan wants to become more involved politically and economically in Iraq, but MOFA's Section Chief for West Asian Affairs Sami Leu told AIT that the political situation there is too "difficult." Leu said that Taipei would like to be active in Iraq because there are considerable Taiwanese interests at stake, but admitted that Taipei must be cautious. Leu claimed that direct aid was offered to Baghdad, but it was refused because of concerns over a strong reaction in Beijing. Leu lamented that Taiwan's options in Iraq are limited because of PRC influence. He said MOFA is studying the feasibility of opening an office in Iraq, but right now the security situation is too problematic. Leu also informed AIT that the August 2004 offer by Nechervan Barzani, the Prime Minister of the Kurdish regional government, to allow Taipei to establish an office in Kurdistan was still being considered, but not likely to happen.

Forced to Use NGOs

3. (C) Due to pressure from Beijing, Taiwan has been forced to seek out NGO partners to act as intermediaries for its aid to Iraq. Michel Ching-long Lu, Chairman of MOFA's NGO Affairs Committee and the Ministry's Spokesperson, told AIT that Taiwan's aid efforts would be blocked by the PRC and that using NGOs was Taipei's only viable option. Lu said Taiwan is still encountering problems in Iraq using NGOs. For instance, he said that PRC NGOs have been instructed to work against Taipei's efforts to coordinate with NGOs in Iraq. Lu added that when Taiwan tries to work with aid organizations, Beijing even pressures groups such as Kiwanis and Rotary to shun Taipei. Lu explained that Taiwan's activities and work with Mercy Corps is a core part of Taipei's strategy to establish alliances with international NGOs and stay active around the world.

The Love From Taiwan Project

4. (C) MOFA has been using the international NGO Mercy Corps to coordinate its primary aid campaign in Iraq called "Love From Taiwan." Owen Hsieh, Deputy Executive Secretary of MOFA's Research and Planning Board, which approves aid projects, told AIT that Taiwan has found Mercy Corps a useful partner and that the relationship allows both parties to fulfill a mutual interest in Iraq. Hsieh said Taiwan's efforts in Iraq began in April 2003 when several Taiwan NGOs were solicited to take part in the aid campaign with Mercy Corps. The campaign collected 27 containers of material aid including food, health supplies, construction materials, and provided agriculture assistance to small communities in Eastern Iraq. MOFA also raised approximately \$1 million for Mercy Corps' "Community Action Initiative" and, in partnership with Taiwan's Ministry of Education, is providing scholarships for Iraqi students to come to Taiwan and is rebuilding damaged schools. Mercy Corps handles the distribution of aid and coordinates the construction efforts on the ground for MOFA.

The IT Action in Iraq Project

15. (C) MOFA is also funding a \$400,000 project called "IT Action in Iraq" to establish internet centers in Northern Iraq and provide IT training to Iraqi students and teachers. MOFA Research and Planning officer Josephine Lee told AIT that the program is providing ten schools with internet centers and working with over 5000 students and 500 teachers. Lee said this is an ongoing project and is also being facilitated by Mercy Corps. She added that MOFA had hoped that Taiwan officials could take part in the aid efforts in Iraq, but that security concerns, not Beijing, had kept MOFA personnel out of Iraq. Thus far, she said, Taiwan has only been able to send an officer from TECRO in Amman to inaugurate a center associated with the grant, and that officer stayed in Iraq for only two weeks.

Expanding the NGO Model

16. (C) Taiwan officials believe that increasing cooperation with NGOs will help Taipei find a way to break free from Beijing's efforts to isolate Taiwan in the global community. MOFA's Lu told AIT that officials were pleased with the results of their work with Mercy Corps and view it as a model for what Taiwan would like to do in the future. Lu said this MOFA-NGO cooperation would be one model for future Taiwan humanitarian assistance. Research and Planning's Lee explained that Mercy Corps is also satisfied and wants additional projects funded in Iraq and will likely propose a new project in February, which the Research and Planning Board will consider. Lu remarked that it was difficult to say whether Taiwan will have additional funds to spend on Iraq and added that Taipei is not trying to promote any political aims.

Comment: No Other Choice

17. (C) The fact that Taipei is having difficulties working with NGOs to provide humanitarian aid in Iraq is one more indicator of the breadth -- and the effectiveness -- of Beijing's efforts to isolate Taiwan. Taiwan is reaching out to NGOs because it has been unsuccessful in its efforts to join international organizations, largely because of PRC influence. Taiwan diplomats see working with NGOs as a possible avenue for multi-lateral diplomacy. Despite assurances from MOFA to the contrary, it is likely that MOFA is trying to use these humanitarian projects to promote its interests in Iraq and pursue the possibility of establishing some sort of relationship with Baghdad. Taipei is also trying to gain as much leverage as possible from its aid programs in Iraq. The "Love From Taiwan" campaign was used by MOFA as a public relations effort and was the subject of a conference in December 2004 complete with distinguished guests and press.
PAAL